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Interview with Samuel R. Gammon III

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR SAMUEL R. GAMMON, III

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: How did you become interested in foreign affairs?

GAMMON: Partly by getting called back into the service for the Korean War. That's a short and sexy answer. I grew up as a faculty brat. My father was the local contact for the Foreign Service exam recruitment.

Q: Where was this?

GAMMON: Texas A & M University. He was the head of the history and government department there for many years. So I grew up with samples of the exam and the usual spiel and it had always been something I had an interest in. His particular field was American history, but he taught diplomatic history courses. So I was aware of it.

I took my Ph.D. when I got out of the Army after World War II. I had not quite completed the Ph.D. when I was snatched back out of grad school at Princeton for the Korean War for a 17-month stint. During that time I more or less made up my mind, so the summer I got out of the Army in '51, I took the three-day exams.

Q: Three-and-a-half-day exams.

GAMMON: Three days plus, offering both French and German. As a grad student, you have two languages, that helps out. What really decided me was a combination, during the McCarthy period and I thought one shouldn't be driven off by a bastard like him. Secondly, I was persuaded of the importance of doing something in the cause of peacemanship so people don't get called back twice in six years out of the educational process. It seemed to me this was relevant. On a less noble level, it was probably that while I was 17 months in the Army in the Korean War—I did not get sent to Korea—two posts in Fort Dix and Fort Lawton inside the States; most of my contemporaries in grad school were finishing up their dissertations and well along with their first book and into their first job, and here I was wasting time.

Q: You felt as though you'd been had.

GAMMON: Slightly, sort of, “Oh, to hell with that. I'll do something else where they can't call me back into the Army.” (Laughs)

Q: You seem to have had an Italian specialty. That was your first of several postings, wasn't it?

GAMMON: Two posts. As you recall, during the Eisenhower Administration early years when McCarthy was romping and snorting there.

Q: We're talking about Senator McCarthy.

GAMMON: Yes, old Joe. During that period, between two and a half and three years, there was no intake of junior Foreign Service officers. When the intake began, it was to staff the Refugee Relief Program. A bunch of us were appointed as staff corps to flesh this out, and actually I had been about six weeks at post when I was sworn in as an FSO-6, old style. I continued in the Refugee Relief Program for about 14 months.

Q: For the record, FSO-6 was the lowest rank, then it dropped to FSO-8 being the lowest.

GAMMON: That was in '56 that they readjusted that back. Now they readjusted it again about seven years ago. At any rate, it was the bottom level, the equivalent of the old fashioned FSO Unclassified in the '30s.

I was sent to Italy for my first posting. I learned the language on the scene, I couldn't even say buon giorno when I arrived. As a result of that, I was transferred out of the Refugee Relief Program to a posting in Milan and basically in admin and in economic work. I'd had a two-month's fill-in as a political officer in Palermo on loan from the Refugee Relief Program, my first post. So that was how the Italian thing came into being. It was happenstance.

Many years later, a good friend of mine found a memo, a list of about-to-be junior officers and suggested assignments, and I was down to go to Kuala Lumpur. That would have changed my whole career. I never did the Far East; you went with the flow.

Q: Your specialty pushed you off on that. Moving ahead, you had mentioned that you became special assistant to the vice-president NSC. I believe you covered this elsewhere?

GAMMON: Yes, I was orally interviewed last year for the LBJ Library and there's an extensive transcript on deposit there for the seven months in the summer of '63. I was dragooned, snatched off the Italian desk to work for him.

In addition to the Italian tours, plus a three-year stint as DCM in Paris, I had two postings in the African scene, which flowed from a tour in Ethiopia and thanks to the French African connection, which I'll come to, Mauritius as ambassador.

The other major career thing was really sort of seventh-floor activities. I had two tours in the executive secretariat. One as a mid-career s/s officer and the other as deputy executive secretary in the early Kissinger period. I was also on two occasion executive assistant to the Under Secretary for Management.

Q: Why don't we move on to the Ethiopia? You went to Asmara as consul general in 1964 until 1967. You had moved up rather rapidly hadn't you?

GAMMON: There were 1,200 Foreign Service officers when our new batch came in in the summer of '54, 1,295 is the number that sticks in my mind. The service then expanded to basically its present size, 3,500 FSOs. A rising tide lifts all boats, and I was one of the lucky crowd.

Q: How did you get your appointment to Asmara?

GAMMON: Network.

Q: How did this work?

GAMMON: The political appointee ambassador was a journalist, Edward M. Korry, who was close to leading Foreign Service people from his tours in I.N.S. Publications. He had been in eastern Europe so he knew people like Luke Battle and various other senior Foreign Service colleagues. Ed's wife was a childhood friend of my wife's college roommate. The was how it always works in the “system.” Ed asked me to go as consul in Ethiopia. It was upgraded after I got there to consulate general, principally so that the chief State Department man would outrank the commanding officer of the large military communications station.

Q: This was the Kagnew station?

GAMMON: Kagnew; he was a bird colonel. Consuls general rank, with, but after brigadiers, consul's rank with, but after chicken colonels. See your colonel and raise it one on the part of the State Department

Q: What were our interests in Asmara in the 1960s?

GAMMON: This was partly due to the cooperative relationship between Korry, who was a great activist, a very able, extremely brilliant, journalist, very interested in the great game of diplomacy and General Paul D. Adams, who was the four star commanding CINC-strike, which was then the US military apparatus for the rest of the world, other than NATO and the western hemisphere. They decided that Ethiopia under the emperor was very important to US national security interest and a secure base, not in the conventional souse military base, but a secure place from which to maneuver in the same way that Kissinger tried to do with the Shah of Iran, though Ethiopia as an ally had a considerably longer life than Iran as the principal US ally in the area.

As the consul general in northern Ethiopia, where our single military communications establishment, plus some miscellaneous classified piggyback operations went on, the Asmara principal officership was largely a Pol Mil job.

Q: Political military?

GAMMON: Yes, trying to keep the military from doing stupid things, which is sometimes a full-time occupation. Total insensitivity to local feeling and the local situation is the curse of our military system in which we move the United States milieu with our forces—the PX, the commissary, the swimming pool, the bowling alley, the whole schmeer as little America.

Q: Can you give any examples of what you would do with the military to keep them from kicking over a particular can of worms?

GAMMON: You didn't always succeed, but you spent a lot of time with them and patted their hands. Some of the Ethiopian officials became smart enough to try and to manipulate the military's frequent innocence. At that time the still-ongoing, Eritrean independence movement was just getting under way, it really kicked on in late '60-'61, political banditry and guerrilla operations against the Imperial government. We obviously stood to gain by being as neutral as possible in that situation because if there's anything more vulnerable

than an antenna garden of say 250, 40 to 80 foot antenna towers held up by guy-wires, to a guerrilla operation, it would be hard to find.

The government was always trying to involve the US military as supporting the regime of Haile Selassie and the establishment. That was mostly the most sensitive thing—trying to keep the military at a lower profile.

Q: When the Ethiopian officials were speaking about the Ethiopian central government officials in Asmara, were they trying to get the military to show the flag?

GAMMON: A bit, in other words, if there was a school strike or something that was politically oriented, they would decree a state of emergency. On one occasion, a very naive commanding officer at Kagnew proceeded to set up machine guns at the corners of the post and sentries and steel helmets and the whole schmeer, which clearly gave the message we were backing the government. We were backing the government, but we shouldn't have been quite so ostentatious and that was the basic situation.

At one point, there was a lengthy negotiation which I did as an addendum to the treaty establishing Kagnew. I say addendum because it was not a formal treaty instrument. We did an agreed interpretation and modification of the treaty of 1953 between the United States and Ethiopia under which Kagnew Station existed. I found, and the embassy agreed, that we could make considerable concessions in the direction of doffing our hat to Ethiopian sovereignty. Such things, for example, as changing the license plates at Kagnew station to make them Ethiopian license plates, with a nominal fee to cover the cost of manufacture, but no profit. Flying the Ethiopian flag at various places on post. Little things like that.

Q: Sometimes these things are hard to sell to the military, aren't they?

GAMMON: We didn't have much trouble on that. Partly because the particularly naive commanding officer, while I was on home leave, got himself in a hideous scrape with the ambassador and the charg#.

Q: What happened?

GAMMON: The general particulars were, he proceeded to inform them that he was in command at Kagnew station and was not obligated to take any advice or anything whatsoever from any State Department people. That was bad news when you try that on a strong type like Korry. Of course, except for major military commands, the Ambassador does have authority. So basically, the embassy told the appropriate military command “this guy must go,” which he did. What always happens when the military has a mess, owing to someone of limited competence, they send in a good man to clean up. That was exactly what happened, they sent in a able man as C.O. who was then properly attentive and recognized that the State Department might be an unwelcome meddler, but at least it had power. So he had to adapt to political advice.

Q: I think this is an important point that is often overlooked. Often a consular officer in the field, where there are American troops stationed, plays a role that is not particularly spelled out. But all the same, there are problems here, you should do it this way, not here. It's public relations.

GAMMON: It's really what in the military establishment would be a J-5 or a G-5 local government relations function.

Q: So one of the important ingredients to being successful is to use diplomacy on your colleagues within the American community?

GAMMON: And anticipate as much as possible. It was interesting work, I used to joke that on the old April Fool sheet where you express your onward assignment preferences, (it used to be submitted in the old days on the first of April—That was before the regime of

bidding for assignments). I had always previously indicated Pol-Mil as a field of interest until I had actually done a lot of it in Asmara—at which point I said I didn't want to deal with the military again unless I could be Secretary of Defense. That was left to Frank Carlucci!

Q: What was our policy towards the Eritrean separatists? Did you have any contact with them?

GAMMON: I had a lot of contact with them. We also had a mapping mission going, we had Air Force, Army and Navy present at Kagnew Station. The Air Force was basically cooperating with the Ethiopians in doing photo mapping of all Ethiopia. On one occasion, near the end of my stay, a US helicopter with an Ethiopian interpreter and two US Air Force types, had a little engine trouble and plumped down into the midst of a group of shifta.

Q: Shifta being?

GAMMON: The political bandit, Eritrean Liberation Front guerrillas. Who promptly burned the helicopter and took them prisoner. There were flying around landing to ask local names for geographic, “What do you call that mountain? What's that stream?” so they could put names on the maps they were constructing.

We had terrific communications of course at Kagnew, much better than the embassy did in Addis. I got in a quick piece saying not to worry they would be released fairly soon because we were on polite terms with the political opposition, the ELF. I had pretty good contacts which I dusted off. Of course, the US military and the Ethiopian military went into a swivet at one point, CINCSTRIKE sent out a planning message for a US parachute regiment to drop into Eritrea. It was a planning message only and obviously would not take place. When a copy of that reached the embassy they went into almost terminal panic! It took two weeks before the three prisoners could be released because there was so

much air patrolling and hunting for them. They were walked by night over to the Sudanese boundary and released.

Q: How did you maintain contact? In so many situations where you have a guerrilla force, we are under strict instructions you just don't talk to the opposition which is usually a bad mistake.

GAMMON: You talk as much as you can. The instructions usually come from the existing government and if you can get away with it you do. One of the leading types that I knew perfectly well and had contact with was one of the guys who had helped Haile Selassie take over Eritrea. Yet, I knew Senator Tedla Bairo well; we had been in social contact, and he was also in touch with the Ethiopian government.

It was a slightly murky situation. I was very confident that the captives would be sprung and they were.

The main thing was to keep us from diving totally into bed with the Ethiopian government's clumsy efforts to recover them by force. They were in due time released. The MAAG brigadier was up and MAAG was all over the place advising the Ethiopian Army which was blundering around hunting. I would say that probably the best reporting thing I did was the last message I sent before leaving Asmara after three and a half years, where I forecast that we knew that the emperor was elderly, we knew that he would be succeeded in time by a military regime and I predicted that Kagnew Station probably had, with luck, five or six good years left and then possibly five to six bad years before we'd be tossed out entirely. I left in '67, I think we were out in '74 or '75, something like that. I was not far off on that forecast.

Q:Did you find, from your point of view, that having a base like Kagnew Station began to be the tail that wagged the dog?

GAMMON: Not so much in my time or in Korry's time because then the embassy was upgraded from a Class III to a Class II mission in that period. I would say that the dominant foreign policy was that Ethiopia is a strong, stable and important country that can be a major asset to US foreign policy.

Kagnew was then probably our most important in-country objective along with growth and stability and MAAG improvement to the Ethiopian military.

Korry was sharp enough to design something which we jokingly called the village team in Asmara, which was a model of the country team. The village team consisted of a MAAG representative, a couple of AID nurses who were attached to the nursing school at the local hospital, the USIS PAO, obviously the CIA station man, and the commanding officer of Kagnew station who came to my weekly staff meeting. This, we referred to, as the village team, which was equivalent to the country team in Addis.

We were very closely tied in with embassy operation. Also thanks to the capabilities of Kagnew Station in the ELINT area.

Q: That's Electronic Intelligence?

GAMMON: I had vast access to ELINT material relating to the entire Horn of Africa and southern Arabia, which I would peruse, and then I would do a weekly summation of things. I would type it myself and send it in a single copy up to the ambassador via the weekly courier, every Thursday morning. So that he was then plugged in, without having to wait for this material to get back to Washington, to the intelligence community to digest and disgorge in much briefer and more sanitized form. That worked fairly well as a feed-in to the ambassador.

Q: So relations in this case, between the consulate general in a politically sensitive area and a strong ambassador were effective. Although being a political ambassador, he was very much aware of what we were about and had a policy.

GAMMON: Although he had his flaws later on in his other ambassador assignment in Chile, he was an excellent, hard charging semi-pro I would say, and really at times you would forget that he was not career. He did a quite good job.

Q: Moving from here to your next assignment, which is Rome, as political counselor. This seems to be normal progression in a way. You had been on the Italian desk, spoke Italian. There is sort of an Italian Mafia, not to coin a phrase, that once in Italy you keep coming back?

GAMMON: More networking because the DCM and frequent charg# was Frank Meloy, who was a friend of Korry's and a not so close friend of ours, so this was the process. The alternative would have been come back to the senior seminar, and I ducked senior training in favor of going to the embassy as political counselor. In fact, I never did have a senior-training, nor mid-career, nor junior-training stint—I was the least trained officer in the Service.

Q: What were your primary responsibilities as a political counselor in a major embassy?

GAMMON: The usual oversight of the political section, including the extremely large tail, the station.

Q: Where you're speaking of the station, you're talking about the CIA?

GAMMON: CIA station. And trying to stay as familiar as possible, which is difficult as a political counselor. Normally the station deals only with the ambassador, and when necessary with the DCM in his potential charg# capacity; of course, I had responsibility for the section, for the political reporting and whatever minor ongoing negotiations might be

going on with the Italian government. A lot of this is exchange of information, i.e., Italy is an ally, though they are the most junior of the major allies. We would say, “Well, we're up to this or we're concerned about such and so in the U.N. or Africa looks disturbing or the Cold War is thus and so.” The ebb and flow of information exchange is the be all and end all of much reporting in friendly countries.

Plus, of course, internal political reporting, because Italy though the miracle had already long since taken place on the economic side, Italy still had an extremely large indigenous communist party.

Q: About 31%, I think.

GAMMON: Yes. Always perceived as a potential threat.

Q: Let me ask a question here, and I'm speaking as a non-Italian specialist, but having had a stint as consul general of Naples. I thought that we seemed to spend an inordinate amount of time reporting on the kaleidoscope of the intimate details of this Italian political scene that never changed. It was little chieftains maneuvering around.

GAMMON: Old soldiers never die, they just fade away. Italian politicians not only never die, they never fade away. Seani had a stroke and Vannoui died, but I guess all the rest are still going!

Q: Other than that, was there really much to report on? Were we getting too involved and getting sucked into the details?

GAMMON: You're taking me into the fringe of classified material.

Q: All right we'll move away.

GAMMON: In the sense that, yes, we were, as common knowledge, we were heavily involved in the '48 election with subsidies to Italian political parties. That had pretty much

withered away while I was on the desk in 1962-63. However, it was not dead yet, let us say.

Q: We're speaking '67 to '70 period?

GAMMON: Yes. And if you have done an oral or are going to do one on Graham Martin, (I don't remember whether he was on the list) you'll get into that. Martin was an aggressive type, the US administration he represented was very, shall we say had a forward policy. I think that's as far as I should go.

Q: Could we talk a little about the ambassadors. While you were there you had three ambassadors.

GAMMON: Freddie Reinhardt.

Q: G. Frederick Reinhardt.

GAMMON: At the end of a very, very long stint, seven or eight years as an ambassador, he could do it in his sleep. He grew up on Italian. His mother was a great Dante' scholar. Freddie was away an awful lot. Splendid ambassador, marvelous. Meloy was charg# a lot of times.

In my second week in Rome, coming on direct transfer from Asmara, Eritrea, I was charg# d'affaires, because Meloy went off on an out of country trip, Reinhardt was away, there was a vacancy in the economic section so I—though not the most senior person in the embassy, I was designated charg# and had the infinite pleasure of having a routine telegram go to my previous post. If you can imagine the pleasure of having my last post receive a message over my name from Embassy Rome. It's equivalent to a vice consul being piped aboard an aircraft carrier, I would say!

Q: Reinhardt obviously, knew how to do this. But then you had a non-career ambassador, Gardner Ackley. Could you describe how you saw his operations in Italy?

GAMMON: Ackley was a fine economist, previous counselor-economic advisor to the president and had been a Fulbrighter in Italy. Gard's handicap was that he didn't really speak Italian though having spent a year in Italy and being ambassador and he had a tin ear, I'm afraid, for languages, and never did master it, which is a distinct handicap. Particularly with a fairly easy language like Italian. So I would say that his ambassadorship of about two years was okay, but not very distinguished. He's an intelligent man, a very nice chap and an adequate ambassador, but not in class with a superb old pro like Freddie Reinhardt or one of the new breed of old pros like Graham Martin, who succeeded him.

Q: How long were you there with Graham Martin?

GAMMON: About two and a half to three months. I already had my assignment when he came. I had been kidnaped to come back on loan to USIA.

Q: Looking at what you saw and some of the reflection that was Graham Martin, how would you describe his style of operation? I've heard things described as almost kind of like the spider king sitting at his place.

GAMMON: Louis XI brought back to life.

Q: Yes, Louis XI. How did you see him?

GAMMON: First of all I wasn't frightened of him as many people justly were. He was there—the gray ghost could be very devious and he knew how to milk the system. He beat out Doug MacArthur for the ambassadorship to Italy. As far as he was concerned getting there was most of the pleasure! Graham is a pure power type and he did it for the fun of it. He used to be rude to William Rogers, the Secretary of State, when Rogers would come through Rome, because he knew Rogers had no power in Washington. It was all Kissinger

and Nixon, which was not very good for him in the long run, shall we say. He was rude and gratuitously so because he could get away with it. I'm sure he gave his DCM, Wells Stabler, an ulcer!

Graham would pull the wings off flies with relish if it were necessary as a power operation. But since I was a short timer, I felt I could speak to him frankly on the most sensitive matters. I said in fact that I thought it might be good to have a strong career man on the scene following a relatively low key, not too professional, political ambassador following, shall we say the last years of an old pro who was frequently absent. I said I thought the embassy needs a little pulling together and you have very much that reputation. I think it probably would be a healthy exercise.

Q: Then you went back to USIA, which was sort of an unusual assignment wasn't it?

GAMMON: There was an effort being made to draw USIA-State closer together as part of the seamless web of the foreign policy establishment. The deputy director of USIA came through Rome and was looking around. I had always had very warm relations with the USIS people in my previous post. I was sympathetic to the work they did and I always felt I wouldn't mind an exchange tour and so, whammo, the next thing I knew I was snatched out of Rome only halfway through the guide book!

Q: How did you find USIA?

GAMMON: Fascinating.

Q: As a Foreign Service officer, from the State Department side of it, was there a difference in tone, attitude?

GAMMON: Yes, very much so. For one thing, there was far less classified material flowing. USIA was then, and still is, deeply schizoid in that it has two functional areas, information and culture. The culture vultures have all of the distinction and the respect from their

colleagues that, let's say somebody in the Admin cone does in State! They're not part of the inner establishment. The propaganda side is the thing, which is short sighted, because in countries like France, you can't get anywhere on your information activities. You try it any way, but you make all your mileage out of culture, the long term, the slow moving, the crafty exploitation of those parts of your culture that have made you worthy of respect and admiration.

Q: Did you also find that the attitude there was more, you might say operational, let's do something rather than let's look back and report on it?

GAMMON: Not so much so because there was Frank Shakespeare.

Q: He was director of USIA.

GAMMON: Yes, with a very good semi-career, deputy. There was certain nervousness that they didn't know what foreign policy was, and of course State is very reluctant ever to tell anybody!

Q: This was during the early Nixon period where you also had the bifocused State Department with Kissinger and National Security Council and Rogers as being not very strong.

GAMMON: Yes, and Shakespeare always felt aggrieved and Henry Loomis his deputy also, because they're not part of the NSC. They would occasionally be invited in, like poor relations, but that always rankled with public diplomacy (which is the slightly puffed-up term for a perfectly legitimate function), that it was not accorded very much respect either by Kissinger or by the State Department establishment even before Kissinger's time.

Q: What were you responsibilities?

GAMMON: I was the deputy assistant director for western Europe. There was an assistant director for eastern Europe who was a Foreign Service colleague, Kempton Jenkins. But

I would say being on loan to USIA, I told Jenkins at one point that it struck me as being just like an overseas assignment, vis # vis the State Department and your friends and colleagues back in State. You treated this like your colleagues were in a foreign ministry overseas. You planned your lunch schedule to keep your contacts. State was only five blocks away, but it might as well have been five hundred miles. There was that kind of working. There was no village team in State. Though curiously enough when I was on the Italian desk I did a little experiment and every two weeks or so I would get together the Italian desk guy from CIA, the Italian desk man from USIA, myself and somebody from AID though we had almost nothing on AID going in '63. We would meet and talk about what was going on. It was very helpful in a sense. But that was sort of an unknown, this was before IGS and SIGS.

Q: IGS and SIGS refer to various structures of bringing everybody together.

GAMMON: Trying to coordinate Washington—that way lies madness, but still you got to try!

Q: We're jumping, but you then moved to M which means management in the Department.

GAMMON: Yes. I was pulled over to be an executive assistant to probably the longest serving non-career, career man in the service for a long time.

Q: Who was that?

GAMMON: William B. Macomber. I acquired a vast admiration for Bill who was a stormy petrol emotionally, believed you could catch more flies with vinegar then you do with molasses. A great many people disliked him, but I liked and admired him.

Q: Could you describe his style of operation because he is a seminal figure.

GAMMON: Constant hyperactivity. I used to joke that my ambition was always to see a four level meeting going on in his office. He would have a meeting convened which would

be working on some problem, then somebody would walk in with another problem, so there would be a superimposed meeting on top of that, and quite often he would take a phone call relating to another problem. That was his style of management.

As Executive Assistant, I was supposed to keep up with things and put them together. Among other things, I was the person who allowed H. L. Hunt in his red wig access to the State Department files during the Watergate period!

Q: How did this come about?

GAMMON: Because of the monitor button on the phone. Macomber said he always wanted me to be on the monitor anytime he picked up the phone so I would know what was going on. Egil (Bud) Krogh, an unhappy memory in the Nixon White House, called Macomber to say, “Bill, I've got somebody here who needs to get into the Saigon files for ten years ago.”

That related to the Kennedy Administration I'm sure you recall from Watergate, Hunt used this access to try and forge incriminating material about the Kennedy regime as part of the general plumbers operation and blackening of everybody else other than the incumbent Administration.

Q: Was Hunt CIA at that time?

GAMMON: On loan to the White House. Macomber said, “Okay, no problem.”

I used to keep my telephone slips. Still do in fact. I weed them out, but I keep them with the date and so forth. I'm awful glad I did that, because I had a telephone slip, Krogh called Macomber, such and such a date, Henry Hunt needs admission to State Department Saigon files. So I called down to central file and said, “He's coming, he has a White House pass let him in, let him have what he needs.” Macomber told me do so.

When Watergate was blowing up all over the place, the press was convinced that everybody was guilty unless proven innocent and making a fairly good case for it. Alex Johnson was terribly pummeled by the press because H.L. Hunt got into State Department files. Obviously State must be deeply involved in the whole Watergate! That sort of rang a bell with me. I dug through my slips and I went down to pass the word to Alex, I said, “The person who let Hunt in, we did it because Bud Krogh telephoned Macomber on such and such a date and said do so. So we did.” The State Department withdrew from tar baby successfully!

Q: No, I think this is an interesting point, how things can operate.

GAMMON: The monitor button was a great time saving device. Macomber once telephoned Alex Johnson, who was Under Secretary for Political Affairs, number three in the Department, about a sensitive personnel matter, who was going to be ambassador to wherever. When Macomber's light went on, I picked up on the monitor button and Macomber said, “Alex, is this call being monitored, I don't want anybody on.” Alex said, “No. Nobody's on down here except me.” And I hung up at that point.

About twenty minutes later Macomber said, “Well, you heard what I said to Alex.”

I said, “No. You said you wanted it unmonitored.”He said, “I didn't mean you!”

Q: What were the major things that you, as a deputy to Macomber, were involved in, some repercussions, management always being a very sensitive issue in the State Department?

GAMMON: This was the period of the beginning of the family problems in the State Department. Macomber put out an order which was that wives were people too! Much to the disgust of his wife Phyllis who said “I am so too an adjunct to your career.” That was the beginning of the whole path that has led to family liaison and dual assignments and the attempt to accommodate by the service, which I think is an impossible task in the modern world with the two career family and so forth. That, plus the grievance problem, the State

Department had no grievance system, plus the whole Alison Palmer-Cynthia Thomas issue.

Q: Could you describe this a little because this is an important area, the Alison Palmer—Cynthia Thomas issue.

GAMMON: Yes, both individuals were essentially feminists early on in the vast and healthy change which has taken place in society and in the service. Both of them, more Alison Palmer, had been victimized by the fact that the State Department, though very enlightened in many ways in the Foreign Service, was not particularly sensitive on such matters.

My first dealing with Alison Palmer had come in POD when she was a staff corps assistant in near east- African assignments and I was brand new in European assignments and personnel. She came on so strong on the telephone and I didn't know beans what we were talking about, but I began resisting vigorously on the theory that nobody's going to steam-roller me. And we ended up with a compromise in which European personnel got away with something we shouldn't have. She was totally right, but her approach was so strong. Then she served in Addis working for Korry, while I was in Asmara. We saw one another only a couple of times. There she was treated as a sort of an assistant to the Ambassador's wife, not as a substantive officer. The old days were not very good for women.

Q: She had already proved herself in the Congo before by actually helping rescue Frank Carlucci.

GAMMON: That exact episode is a little murky, I'm not sure Frank's version quite agrees with Alison's, but there's no question about it that she did have a very distinguished career. And she had been turned down for an assignment to Uganda by another old career

ambassador because he didn't see how he could use a woman officer. Korry took her, but then misused her abilities.

At any rate, she had a legitimate grievance, I've forgotten the nature of it, and went to the old style clumsy, farce of a grievance system and was told, “Oh, you oughtn't to pursue this, you'll get a bad name in the service that will damage your career!”

So Macomber was out front working to solve the problem of how to accommodate families, wives, women career people and set up a real grievance system. Beginning to get into the desperate shortage of minorities then in the service. Working on that front, he was dealing with the grievance problem to try and set up grievance machinery. This was also the era of the young Turks in the Foreign Service association.

Q: Could you describe for the record the young Turk movement, I say this because I was one of those fifty who signed this thing called, “Towards a New Foreign Service”, or something like that so I guess I was a young Turk.

GAMMON: Let's just say that the '60s and early '70s, which saw the revolt on campus, the dirty speech movement, the revulsion against Vietnam, a great many things, inevitably, that society does, impacts on monasteries, nunneries, the Foreign Service and other closed establishments! The impact was being felt in the early '70s quite acutely. Feminism, the aversion to the old style, very small, very cozy and hierarchic Foreign Service of the '30s, forties, '50s and early '60s, was under way. As far as the Foreign Service Association the young Turks, (most of them are now old Turks), were an effective voice which was listened to.

Bill Macomber maintained very close ties with my old and close friend Bill Harrop who was then director of the Foreign Service Association and who, as a young Turk, was still a moderate.

In general, my impression is that the State Department, thanks to Macomber and to the basic good sense and essential moderation of most of the reformers in the career service, came out very well. We ended up a with good and functioning grievance system, which in its final negotiated form was very little different from the one that Macomber put in pro tem unilaterally. It was a rather enlightened policy, about as good as one can do in terms of treatment of families and not requiring unpaid labor from spouses, and in terms of accommodating as much as possible to two career families, all of those things which have come on since. A lot of that improvement came from Macomber's ability, as he would put it frequently, “We've got to take the high road!”

Q: Did he philosophize? Did he come in aware of what was happening or was this a reaction?

GAMMON: He had all of the ability to work out a course of action that Henry Kissinger did on substantive matters. Macomber could look at a situation, foresee the political implication, the rights and wrongs. He is a man of outstanding integrity. The example there which I still find incredibly illustrative of his character, was that one of the dissidents who shall be nameless, was perpetually bad mouthing him on the Hill and who had a certain number of contacts including even going out socially with a certain member of congress. There was matter in the security files of the State Department related to the family of said person which was devastating. Macomber, essentially a political animal, felt this type of subversive knife in the back work painfully and acutely. He agonized. Secretary Rogers urged him to use some of the material in the State department's security file, selective leaking on the Hill to absolutely snatch the rug out from under this particular dissident. Which would have been very doable. Macomber wrestled with that briefly and then said to me, “I won't do it, can't do it. There is material in there that would hurt other people and I'll be damned if I'll do it.” There are not many like that in this town!

Q: No, I give full credit.

GAMMON: Yes, and that type of personality and integrity, I think did an awful lot in dealing with dissidents. They knew that Macomber might not agree with them, but he would go as far as the situation would permit and that he was a person of rectitude and integrity.

Q: You were there at a very crucial time in the structure of the Service.

GAMMON: In the structure of the service he is a key figure.

Q: Because had there been somebody who was purely reacting and being kept on the run, these forces were very aggressive.

GAMMON: His predecessor, Idar Rimestad.

Q: He hasn't been interviewed.

GAMMON: Idar was a previous under secretary for management and his reaction to “the revolt on campus” in the Service was to lash down the safety valves and sit on them. That, of course, made things worse when Macomber began venting steam. It really was getting dangerous.

Q: It was a time when the whole thing could have really blown apart.

GAMMON: It could have blown. And which would have been a great loss to the country and to the service itself. We could have self destructed in that period. And remember this was the Nixon Administration also.

I have seen how the patronage channel operates in government. I saw it later on when I was in the same office for about a year in the Carter Administration. I saw it also in the Nixon-Ford era in M and in the executive secretariat. You cannot run the US government without patronage. We operate with changing administrations, changing political parties

and the spoils system carefully limited and moderated is indispensable to making our system work.

Q: Why is this?

GAMMON: Because we do not operate with a government which is totally filled with career people. Because we bring in outsiders for our political leadership. What did Jimmy Carter know about running the government? What did Gerry Ford know about the executive branch? You can argue that George Bush may know reams about the executive branch and even a certain amount about the legislative branch, but that's a rarity. Reagan came in as a governor, he didn't know beans about Washington. People bring in with them those who are close to them and whom they trust from the political side. So that the patronage function at its best is a means of harnessing the government to the aims, needs, requirements, ambitions, goals of our political parties or political movement. And that's the interface.

Q: How did you come across the patronage business?

GAMMON: The patronage office was attached to Macomber's office and it was fascinating. I dealt with two or three people and the other terminal was over in White House personnel. Let me just say that observing it during eight or ten years in the service and from outside for going on eight years, it's my firm conviction that each office of White House personnel becomes less competent than the previous one, regardless of party!

The way that the patronage thing is subject to corruption is it becomes flagrant, it becomes pure spoilsmanship. When Kissinger came over from the White House he discovered that with one shining excepting there was nobody in the entire office of Protocol who spoke any foreign language. It was filled up with turkeys who liked to go to parties. It's made to order for the abuse of patronage. So there was this perpetual pressure to put incompetent or misfits into jobs. You may not get a skilled expert already trained coming into a job, but you've got to perpetually fight to try and get the best fit you can and people who are

capable of growth and so forth which sometimes means going to the mat with the White House. Macomber fought off a Nixon patronage effort to start using consulate general for political appointees.

Q: I recall this because we had a protest meeting. I was part of the Consular Officers' Association.

GAMMON: Yes. Macomber told the White House, “This is funny paper stuff, this went out with Teddy Roosevelt.”

Now there, of course, have always been a rare exception from time to time, but he could hold that one off. By and large, the ratio of career to non-career appointments was pretty good in the Nixon-Ford years. Partly because Henry Kissinger, who is one the smartest men alive, acquired an enormous staff of brilliant career people, who were his people and he would move them around. That was one reason that we did so well during those political twilight years around Watergate.

Q: Did you get involved in dealing with the White House at all in that job?

GAMMON: Not directly, but I knew what was going on.When I moved after the Macomber period, I had completed my two years on that job. Ted Eliot, as one of his last acts as Executive Secretary of the Department, brought me down the hall to SS as Deputy Executive Secretary and I spent a two year stint there.

Q: Could you describe what the Secretariat does and then what you were doing?

GAMMON: The Secretariat was invented by George Marshall, who was accustomed to sound staff work. So he set up an executive secretariat, Luke Battle was one of the early incumbents there, as a sort of a clearing house to coordinate the paperwork and the activities of the top seven or eight officials of the State Department which in our day and age means the secretary, the deputy secretary, the three Under Secretaries,

political, economic and security assistance, the Under Secretary for Management and the counselor. This is the silk-stocking row on the seventh floor, and all of them of course have personal staffs.

They have busy activities, but S/S is the traffic cop in the middle that keeps track both of the paper, the travels and the activity. For example once in S/S, I saw a piece of paper coming back from Joe Sisco's office, Under Secretary for Political Affairs, number three in the Department. It was a staff study, and Joe using his best judgment, had made a decision on this and I said, “Whoop, tilt.”

Because I knew having seen a paper that Secretary Kissinger had acted on a few hours before and gone in another direction on a related matter. So I called Joe and said, “Joe, the secretary on thus and so has decided, let me take this paper back down to you.”

Q: Your job was to absorb the information, understand where things were going?

GAMMON: And to make sure that things worked. And the secretariat essentially handles and coordinates and does final dispatching of all the telegrams that involve the top officers of the Department after they make sure they're properly cleared before they go in and make sure they're properly distributed after they come out. It handles the distribution of all incoming telegraphic traffic making sure it goes in the right place, including the very sensitive stuff. It handles the flow of paper, the staff studies that come up, options and so forth, and believe me that was exciting under Kissinger. He really gave the State Department a crash graduate course in writing intelligent staff studies.

Q: What were the problems and how did you work with this?

GAMMON: I spent three months in the Rogers era before Henry came over as secretary. The first thing we did when he arrived was to double staff his personal staff, his office. He worked normally 13-14 hour days which meant we worked 15-16 hour days. So we had two shifts, the first shift would start at seven in the morning and work until two in the

afternoon and the second shift would start at two in the afternoon and work, if necessary until midnight. But you couldn't do that with officers—those poor bastards, including us in S/S, we worked straight through.

At any rate, Henry introduced a healthy dose of realpolitik into American foreign policy. Foreign Policy has never gotten away from this necessity, but we are, to our credit, a country of amiable, good natured people who want to do the right thing!

We have a heavy cargo of ideals and it's to our credit. But that cargo can work to our disadvantage in the cold, cruel world sometimes. And Henry is nothing, if not a practitioner of Real- and Macht politik, with a healthy dose of central European pessimism. So that in a sense, what he did for US foreign policy, and it will be a long time before we sort out what share is his and what share is Nixon's. But they were a marvelous combination as far as foreign affairs that worked in everything except Vietnamese affairs.

So that role was useful to some extent. It was absorbed by the American public, though it generated its own reaction. The reaction came in the form of the Carter emphasis on human rights, which was very welcome and was perhaps a little bit of a warning sign. Yes, we deal in power politics and yes, we're number one, we're top dog and all the rest of it. But at the same time what do we believe in and what are we pushing is important too.

Q: That was a baby that was going out with the bath water.

GAMMON: Exactly, and it was basically a healthy development. The other thing Henry did was on the staffing of paper. You and I know that you can get away with sending up to, let's say Secretary Rogers, even despite S/S's best effort, a piece of paper which gives three options and one of them is totally impossible, the other one is ridiculous, so then you nudge the top officer into picking the one that you want him to pick. That's a vast over simplification, but there's always that instinct of a functioning bureaucracy not to allow the people at the top really to do much because god knows what they'll do!

Henry wouldn't hold still for this. Any staff paper had to have viable options, real options which were intellectually sound or staffed out with intellectual ruthlessness. And the quality of the paperwork scared; I haven't seen any in the last seven years, but that was a damn good education for the career department personnel.

Q: Again, these interviews are being done really for somebody who is outside the government to read. Many decisions that are made that really guide the course of government policy are made by professionals writing out papers, sending options up to the head who then picks off A, B or C or something like that. Is this the way? There are many things where the great man or great woman doesn't get involved.

GAMMON: Henry used to let his paperwork pile up until his next trans-Atlantic flight, in which case he would take along a backlog of thirty or forty staff studies and do them on the plane. And then the results would be cabled back to us from the first stop, whether it was Tel Aviv or Cairo, on the shuttle and then we would mark the copies we had and put them into effect sending the necessary instructions.

Q: Would you keep these in mind as a general policy if you're doing this because sometimes I can see where these things could be somewhat contradictory or something.

GAMMON: Yes, and he worked to a clear, well thought out framework of essentially the detente policy. His idea was that we should tie the Soviet Union down like Gulliver with so many strands of relations and activities that they would be unable to make trouble. I guess you could argue that perhaps glasnost and perestroika is a result of this just as much as it's a result of our fantastic arms build up in the late Carter and eight Reagan years. But whatever it is, it's most welcome.

Henry had a coherent philosophy, which he worked to, and he would not accept things that would go contrary to it. Now this could go wrong. I had the pleasure several years ago of telling Count Wachtmeister, the Swedish ambassador, who was dean of the Dip Corps at

the time he left Washington. I told him once, How it came about US-Swedish relations had warmed up? He was the Secretary General of the Swedish Foreign Ministry and as you recall in the late Nixon, early Ford years we were on icy terms.

Q: Very, I don't think we even had an ambassador.

GAMMON: We had no ambassador and we dropped to the charg# level and then we pulled out our charg# and dropped to a lower charg#. Because of Vietnam basically and pious preaching by the Swedes which was no more welcome with us than pious American preaching was during the 19th century to those wicked Europeans! The Indians filled this role briefly in the '50s, early '60s until they ran into trouble. We had a whole 100 years of international preaching in this country.

At any rate, Wachtmeister was coming to the U.N. briefly and the Swedish Embassy inquired delicately of the European bureau whether if he came to Washington he might be received by the State Department, by presumably the Assistant Secretary Art Hartman. That was a decision that EUR didn't feel it should make so they whipped a staff study up to Henry. It discussed the background situation. The secretariat, S/S, failed in its function. The paper had slightly murky options. Option one, we receive Count Wachtmeister and the alternative that we indicate the timing is not convenient and not receive him. Henry skimmed this through very hastily, checked that we (I) receive him, but the whole tenor of the staff study was that Art Hartman receive him in EUR.

Q: This is at a relatively low level.

GAMMON: Yes, at the bureau level. And then Henry almost the next day was up as a witness before the Foreign Relations Committee accompanied by Larry Eagleburger who was of course, on his personal staff, the key figure who made possible Henry's operations. And somebody, probably Hubert Humphrey, said, “Well, when are we going to warm up to the Swedes?”

Obviously reflecting the Minnesota Scandinavian interests. Henry said expansively, “Not to worry, I'm receiving the Secretary General of the Foreign Ministry.”

Henry having said so, that became policy. So Wachtmeister came and he was received by Kissinger, much to the surprise of EUR, so everything leap-frogged six months!

I was at a dinner party with Wachtmeister three or four years ago, at least and told him this funny story of how it happened which he never heard before.

So S/S failing to make sure that the staff study was as precise in its options, that Hartman receive, that we not receive. Its imprecision lead Henry to leap frog policy down the pike.

Q: Secretaries of State sometimes become notorious for not being interested in anything but special things. Talking to people who dealt with Dean Rusk say that his interest in European affairs was mainly to refer them to George Ball. And Henry Kissinger never thought of Africa or Latin America. Did you keep things away or did he do this pro-forma?

GAMMON: No, the system shakes down to special interests. Like the well-known story that a commanding officer inspects his troops and he'll be a bug on one thing, one CO will be concerned about the cleanliness in the mess, in the kitchen, and the next one will worry about spare shoelaces and the one after that will be that combat boots, that their trousers be bloused in the right way by the proper use of a condom tied inside the trousers! The system adapts very quickly. It becomes known that the secretary is not going to devote much time unless something is of earthshaking importance, is not going to devote much time to Latin America or Africa, let's say, in that particular era. Therefore, whoever on the seventh floor is serving as the chief of the geographic bureau or holding the ring between a geographic and a functional bureau, EB and EUR for example, or mediating a dispute between FE as it then was and EUR. Somebody on the seventh floor has to do that. So that, that becomes the modus operandi, it's never spelled out in writing, but it just is.

Q: And you all are familiar with it.

GAMMON: Everybody in S/S probably knows that better than anybody else. And the bureau may call up it's faithful S/S line officer, a junior officer, mid-career officer in the Secretariat, and say, “Hey, we've got this thing on so and so. Should that go to Under Secretary for political affairs or the deputy secretary or the Secretary?”

And the Secretariat will say, “Yes, I think it ought to go to the Deputy Secretary instead of the usual or the Secretary might be interested in this one let's try it on him.”

Q: The traffic position is an extremely important one.

GAMMON: Sure, and he knows which streets are one-way and which are dead ends.

Q: I'd like to go on to what must have been a fascinating assignment as a Deputy Chief of Mission in Paris. Is this considered a particularly good job or not?

GAMMON: In the good old days it was one of the best, and all DCM's Paris went on to embassies. I think I was the last one for whom that was an absolute rule because Chris Chapman, my successor, did not. I'm not sure about the later successors. But indeed previously an ambassador might come back to be a DCM in Paris like Cecil Lyon, been somewhere as ambassador in Latin America then went to Paris as DCM and then went to Ceylon as ambassador again. His wife, who was Joseph Grew's daughter, once told us on a visit to Paris, she said, “ When we arrived in Ceylon and we were on our way into town from the airport I looked at Cecil and said, 'Cecil, let's go back to Paris.'”

Paris was a major break because I was not fluent in French, though I crammed the hell out of it for the six or seven weeks I had to get up to speed. I read French fluently, but I never before served in a French-speaking post.

Q: Your ambassador to begin with was Kenneth Rush?

GAMMON: Ken Rush, who picked me for the job, and was a previous Deputy Secretary of State and who had dealt with me in S/S and picked me for the job following Galen Stone, who then went as ambassador to IAEA and then to Cyprus from Paris.

Q: How did Rush use you as a DCM?

GAMMON: I like Ken, he knows the great game, knows it very well, but he was not hyperactive, he was in a sense “energy efficient,” shall we say. He would say basically, “I will deal with the prime minister and the President of the Republic.”

Giscard d'Estaing, was President in those days, the Prime Minister Jacques Chirac, the Mayor of Paris, a fascinating man. And usually Ken would see the foreign minister, and say to me you do everything else. Which meant all the rest of the cabinet with their business to be done. The Director General of the Quai d'Orsay, the whole schmeer. And then, of course, he would be gone at least four months out of the year, out of the country, so I did an awful lot of charg# time. Whenever anything went wrong or something hit the fan I was charg#, that's a paranoid's rule of thumb. It became very different under his career successor, Hartman, for my last year.

Q: So at the time under Rush, you were really much more an operator as Deputy Ambassador rather than sitting down and being the manager as often a DCM is.

GAMMON: Which is exactly what I was for Hartman, who is, of course, a crackerjack pro and an old friend.

Q: This is Arthur Hartman.

GAMMON: Yes, I switched to being the floor manager and particularly looking after the huge mission. We had something like thirty agencies in Paris, including the Veterans Administration and Social Security!

Q: That was obviously done for efficiency sake rather than putting them someplace cheaper like Tangier or something like that.

GAMMON: Yes, and interestingly enough when Kingman Brewster came in as Ambassador to London in the early Carter period and fairly late in the day for me in Paris, I had this funny message from London shortly after he arrived, that he was going to be in Paris and needed an hour's time with me. I said, “What was all this?”

When he duly came he said in effect that he was thinking about how he should organize his embassy in London and somebody in Washington said come and talk to Sam Gammon across the channel. So I told him in effect it's like, where does the 800 pound gorilla sleep? You organize the embassy in the way which will be most effective for your operation. Then I talked a little bit about Rush's role and how the embassy functioned. And about Hartman's role, he had been there three or four months and how obviously he was starting to function. Brewster had already picked his DCM, who was coming over from US NATO, and said, “Talk to him, and you do it any way you want.”

In fact I think he experimented, somebody told me, with merging the political and economic sections or some adventurous innovation of that sort. I said, “Whatever works for you is fine, there ain't no you got to do it this way or you got to do it that way.”

Q: Who managed the store, the operations of the embassy when you were acting as really the deputy ambassador?

GAMMON: To a very considerable extent the section heads. I tried to get to all of the constituent posts and I think I got to all of them at least twice during my three and a quarter years in Paris. For some reason I seemed to have made it to Nice more often than to Lyon, I can't think why! And similarly staying in touch with the other agency operations, the Secret Service, the Treasury, the Social Security and the Battle Monuments Commission, all of the rest of them. But I relied very heavily on the counselors.In fact, when I visited

Moscow a couple of years after I left the service, Warren Zimmermann, who came to Paris with Hartman as political counselor, said to me—I was ravished with pleasure, very decent of Warren because he was then DCM Moscow,— “I'm trying to operate this job the way you did in Paris. I was very impressed that you never peered over my shoulder or joggled my elbow as political counselor and I'm trying to do the same here.”

Q: In the 1975 to '78 period in France, what were our major issues with France?

GAMMON: Concorde landing rights.

Q: Concorde being a jet aircraft?

GAMMON: The supersonic transport which was only allowed to land in Washington for a year and a quarter because the Federal government used to control the landing field. New York wouldn't let it in. The French people were furious with this, because this was their macho symbol. The Brits thought it would be nice and yes, it would happen, but they didn't work themselves into a rage.

It had all the sensitivity for the French people, that French “trimming” vis # vis terrorists did it for us. They sprung a couple of nasties, Abdul Aboud was nailed and arrested and they let him go very quickly. When Jean Fran#ois Poncet, who was later Foreign Minister, nailed me at a reception at the Embassy, “You've got to do something about Concorde.”

I said, “Yes we do, we're working on it very hard and I realize that this is every bit as neuralgic to your people, to the entire French people as Abdul Aboud is to the American people.”

Q: So very often you save up things and then sit down and work them out?

GAMMON: Yes, an embassy is a funny bird. As you know, its partly on the side of the country and people to which it is accredited. Because it sees them close up, it understands their problem, but it can never lose sight of the basic US interests. When you've been too

long in the country or you're suffering from what's called localitis, then you become more nearly the representative of the host country to your own, which is dreadful. That's terrible and it's a perpetual danger because you work like smoke to understand and get close to and to empathize with the people and the government of the country to which you are accredited. Particularly if it's a friendly or allied country etcetera. But at the same time, you can't give away the store in anyway whatsoever, so there you are balanced in-between.

I did an awful lot of work on African problems. Partly because France had more clout in Francophone Africa by the mid to late '70s than Britain did in what somebody once referred to as Anglo-Saxon Africa. That by the way, was an African diplomat, who referred to Anglo-saxophone.

Q: The French maintained troops in many of those places?

GAMMON: Sure, and a willingness to send them back in. US relations with France, the water was muddied by Gaullism an awful lot. Though we talked, and we talked intimately on some things, there was always this desire on the part of the successors of the General to cock a shock at the US because they could get away with it.

One thing I found most helpful in dealing with US congressional visitors who come in believing that the French are not our allies and garbage like that. I always said, “Well, the French are following exactly the policy of General Pershing and President Wilson in World War I. They're an associated power, but they're not part of the unified command structure.”

But particularly on African matters, there were things that France could do in Africa that were highly desirable from the western point of view that we could not. They could send troops into Zaire which they did a couple of times or into Chad.

Q: Because they sort of were acting in a way, maybe it's not the right term, but sort of a cat's paw for the whole western position.

GAMMON: Sure. As I once commented to Fran#ois Poncet, “we have to be careful on these things because we don't want people to say you're our Cubans.” The bottom line was that France was a hell of a lot more effective and a hell of a lot more authoritative middle power that could do things in our interests, as well as its own, that we could not.

For instance, the French Air Force was short of long range airlift, they could do short range, they could airlift to northern Chad, but as you get them beyond that if they're going to tidy things up in Zaire, if the Belgians didn't, then they had to borrow our airlift. So they could have a lot of sensitive things needing crash action and very fast turnaround time.

Q: Really you could say the nervous system is all there, but it wasn't talked about and it was sort of almost understood when the chips are down as happened in the Cuban Missile Crisis? That France often is in a much more stalwart position than Britain or some other countries?

GAMMON: And usually also the career people. The French diplomatic pros and the French military are much closer to us than the French political scene. So a politician like Chirac would want to swagger a little bit and have a couple of cock crows from the French rooster where the pros would forget all that stuff.

We're never really comfortable with France, the American people, because our establishment is northern European and we come from a beer drinking Anglo-Saxon pattern and we do not understand and we have very little respect for wine drinkers! So the French are rated in the American unconscious—at surprising high levels,—very often get treated as though they were Italians or Greeks or Mediterranean types. Which they ain't. They have that part of their culture too, but no more than we. For instance because of the powerful influence of our very large Afro-American minority through the years, jazz and slang and cultural what all, but we aren't an African or a Caribbean country. So that's part of the disconnection between the two countries.

Q: You and the Embassy, at the time, were aware of these currents and you dealt with them realizing there is a sort of a cross misunderstanding, but at the same time a cross affinity.

GAMMON: Yes, you worked to reinforce the basic tie perpetually, to be sympathetic on Concorde problems, to send as strong a message as you can back to the US The French used to say, “Why didn't the US government just tell New York the plane can land?”I would say, “That's all the fault of a Frenchman.” Montesquieu and separation of powers influenced our Framers of the Constitution! We don't have a unitary government like France does where the pr#fect in Bordeaux is not going to say that an American jet can't land there.

Q: You were there in '77 when the Carter Administration took over from the Ford Administration. How was this reflected in our relations as you saw it?

GAMMON: It was basically my last year plus. The Carter crowd took longer to shake down. In other words, there was a certain amount of na#vet# at various levels. Not so much in State, where Secretary Vance and the pros were in good shape, but as far as the White House was concerned, a certain amount of awkwardness, such as the barely visible shudder on the Carter visit to France when the White House decreed to its advance people that they were not willing to wear black tie. So the French dinner party at Le Trianon for 130 or 140 people were long dresses for women and tenue de ville for men. And the funny on that one was at the very last minute, about ten days before the event, long after the invitations had gone out, Sally Quinn and the Washington Post had a snide article about these clowns from Plains, Georgia who don't even know what a black tie is. So we got a hasty telegram W.H. saying “we've reconsidered and we're willing to do black tie for the banquet” and the advance man for the White House in residence came into me in a swivet. I said, “Not to worry, I'll take it around, we'll kill this off.”So I went around to see the chief of protocol in the Quai d'Orsay, and said, “Jean-Paul sit down. Jean-Paul, I have

to ask you a question and just reply honestly and we'll take care of it all, but I have to go through the motions." Then I delivered the message.

He sprang up, "No, no"-The invitations have already gone out. "Just say no and I'll take care of it." The US chief of protocol who advanced that trip, whose name happily escapes me, but who's previous experience of power had been mayor of a central Massachusetts town, had just been to London, which was an earlier stop on the Carter trip. Then he came on to Paris, this was his first trip outside of the US, and he was saying, "Gee, that London is a great place; you ought to go there some time."

Q: This does show how even trivial things can get played up.

GAMMON: They capture the atmosphere.

Q: They capture the atmosphere and a new administration coming in with people who don't know, but exercising power for the first time.

GAMMON: It takes time, the good ones learn very quickly and the lucky ones don't have a Bay of Pigs.

Q: How about France in the Middle East? We've talked about Africa.

GAMMON: In general the Middle East, the French instinct was to outflank us and anybody can do with the Islamic world. French public opinion was Pro-Israeli. But the difference between France and the United States, still existing, is that foreign affairs is a prerogative of the throne or in this case the Elys#e and public opinion doesn't count for much.

I have enormous respect for the Quai d'Orsay and the French Dip Corps, but when they blow one, and they do occasionally, it's always an issue in which public opinion is so outraged over some issue or policy some step that the Elys#e and the Quai d'Orsay

have done, as they would do on anything, and then they're caught by surprise by a public opinion blast and have to walk the kitty back.

We, in our government, spend all our time agonizing with the funny papers and public opinion and “will it play in Peoria and what does congress think.” So we're probably too unwilling to do anything risky.

I would say, in general, the French were always nudging us to be less captive of the Israeli lobby. During our time, there no major flaps. Maybe minor flaps like the Abdul Aboud business. And to my great pleasure, the French were pretty tough on internal terrorism. The French and the Israelis between them took care of about three terrorists at Orly, who tried to shoot up an AIEI flight on the ground and in the airport terminal. To my distinct and great pleasure, and I always wanted to go around and shake the hand of the actual police type who had done it, one of the murderers that was killed was the guy who had killed Frank, Ambassador Meloy in Beirut. Frank was a good friend. I was gratified by that one. A routine precautionary episode and a couple of Israeli security guards and the French guards on the scene that responded instantly and did away with the three terrorists.

Q: How did you get appointed as an ambassador?

GAMMON: Networking.

Q: The word network comes out, how did this particular network work?

GAMMON: I came back from Paris in February of '77, early in the Carter Administration, to sniff around. I had then been two and a half years in Paris, to test the water and sense the atmosphere. The first year of a new administration is always thin pickings for the career service as far as embassies are concerned because there are so many political debts to be paid off and the cascade effect of the changes that flow out of that.

The word clearly from all hands, including Dave Newsom was sit tight, anybody who has a job is lucky and if it's overseas he's twice as lucky. That's the old foreign service view. So I then made an estimate of the situation, which said to me very clearly the number of career ambassadorial appointments is disproportionately high in Africa which has a large number of countries, most of which are of very modest interest to political appointees. So I've got to play the African card very strongly if I want to go on to an embassy.

My good friend Harrop, was of course, senior deputy assistant secretary in the African bureau. I had been sounded at one point whether I'd be willing to go to Ethiopia. I was in on home leave from France then and in effect said, “No, this is a rear guard action there.”

Q: This is Ethiopia, Haile Selassie was gone.

GAMMON: Yes, under the “derg” and the present regime. I quite frankly had doubts whether they would have gotten an agreement because I had all my contacts and friends and so forth were with the Old regime.

I let Dick Moose, the assistant secretary of African affairs and Harrop know that I would be interested in a post. Of course, anything that had to do with Africa in the African bureau's interest, at least half the time, it went through Paris. They were very pleased to have somebody other than the mid-career officer in the political section with African expertise looking after this aspect of things. So it was a natural, in that sense. I got a phone call, I think it was from Harrop as I recall, saying, “Hey, how about Mauritius?”

Which was not the most exciting of posts, but after three and half fairly frenetic years in Paris, I thought a nice rest cure had a certain amount of appeal.

Q: You went to Mauritius, we're talking about 1978.

GAMMON: December of '78.

Q: Until 1980. I have to say as I look this up in my normal reference, about the only thing in that period that occurred seem to be a reference in the general newspapers of Mauritius, was a heavy weight boxing match with a man named Spinks.

GAMMON: I think that actually happened just before or just after my time. Very quiet. In Mauritius, it's in the middle of the Indian Ocean, but it's technically in the African bureau, State Department geography! But the real home bureau is the chief of Naval Operations. Mauritius, from US government overall point of view the African bureau only cares because the Bureau of International Organization Affairs says, “Get the damn Mauritians to vote right on such and such an issue in the UN.” That's about the only business we deal.

Earlier we had a brief Peace Corps flutter there, but we had almost no aid program in Mauritius. The reason being is that it's French turf. France has the neighboring island of Reunion, which is 90 miles away, and which is a department of the republic. The same way that the Martinique-Guadeloupe are and Tahiti, etc., etc. The African left-wing, extremist, anti-colonial careerists in the Organization for African States were always attacking this “vestige of colonial imperialism,” poor Reunion, held, etc., under the fall and all this garbage.

In fact, the French were spending money like it was going out of style. They would cough up—the hexagon, continental France, was shelling out something like $400 or $500 per capita for the 350,000 people in Reunion, so it was not a self-supporting. Even the communist party of Reunion wouldn't say, “We want independence.”

They would just say, “We want autonomy.”

Which meant keep sending the money and leave us alone.

Q: Did you have responsibility with Reunion?

GAMMON: I acquired it, because by one of those curious footprints on the beach, the Foreign Service manual, Reunion was actually in the consular district of Antananarivo. Made no sense. So one of the things that I did was I lynched it away from Madagascar, which couldn't have been happier to shuck that off and Reunion was put under Mauritius. Because we had six or eight flights a day back and forth instead of three or four a week from Antananarivo. That made some sense.

I had modest dealings with the French internal security people in Reunion because, thanks to my knowledge of their home structure in Paris, I paid a courtesy call there on one of my visits and that sort of thing. But basically, what we told the Mauritian government, if they wanted aid from us, I'd say, “Shake down the French.”

The French were worried about the security of Reunion. They didn't want moderate Mauritius leading the hue & cry against imperialism. So the Mauritians had leverage and they could get money out of the French. A little dab out of the British of course because it was part of the Commonwealth. We had a free ride!

The only irritant was Diego Garcia, which the Mauritians are fond of treating as Mauritius Irridentus. In fact, the British ran all of their 19th Century Indian Ocean possessions out of Mauritius, it was an administrative capitol.

Q: How far away is Diego Garcia?

GAMMON: 1500 miles. It's much further north and somewhat east. I never got there, I wanted to go, but in order to go for a visit I would have had to fly from Mauritius to Bombay, change planes and fly to Singapore, board the weekly military supply flight from the Philippines when they refueled in Singapore, fly over to Diego, spend eight hours on the ground then go back to Singapore and reverse course; it would have taken me a week to spend eight hours on the island. I would have done so if I had stayed a full tour.

When the Mauritians would come around with their every four months protest demonstration I would say, “Well, gee whiz, go talk the British high commissioner. We're just renting, they're the landlords, we just rent space there.”

Q: So our interest there was really to make sure that the relations were relatively quietly continued.

GAMMON: That we continued to enjoy access to a liberty port. The seventh fleet would come in three or four times a year, parts of it, and Mauritius, which has a couple of topless beaches, is a hell of a lot more attractive as a liberty port than Diego Garcia, where the shore party comes on the ship for R and R!

Q: Did you have any problems with the Navy coming in?

GAMMON: Not really. It was perfectly all right. We had a nuclear sub in once. No problem of any sort. But at one point when the commander of the seventh fleet was in on his plane, we had a Russian aircraft carrier in port. That was more darn fun because the Prime Minister had organized a handsome representational luncheon to the American admiral and he called me up rather nervously and said, “Russians ships are going to be in here and” gulp, “ would you mind if I included the Russian admiral in that.”I said, “No, I'm sure my admiral will be delighted.”

Which he was. He offered to go and pay a courtesy call even though he outranked. I bet that burned up the wires from the carrier to the Kremlin. “What do we do now boss?” Our admiral would have given his left arm to go on board for a courteously call and a peek, but he wasn't permitted. But that was the concern, to deny Mauritius from going a flip flop and the opposition party was socialists and left of center, but it finally came to power in Bob Gordon's period.

Q: Bob Gordon was the ambassador that took over.

GAMMON: My successor. A quick adaptation was made so nothing changed. It remained a moderate centralist government, sympathetic to the west. That was about it. My last two weeks in town, I had to stir them up on the issue of Afghanistan. Where interestingly enough, the reaction of the Mauritian government to my unauthorized strong representation, because I knew that in due time when they finished all their clearances in State I'd get an instruction from Washington.

Q: This is an objection because of the Hindu connection?

GAMMON: Yes, Mauritius tended to think, “Well, yes, it's terrible what the Russians did in Afghanistan, but you all shouldn't give any arms to Pakistan.” Half the population are Hindus and the prime minister and father of independence was Hindu, so they knee-jerked and they vibrated on the Hindu way of life.

Q: I take it that you saw very definitely your role as making sure that if anybody was going to do something it would be the French ambassador for the most part?

GAMMON: Yes, when it comes to aid or spending money, and make sure that we continue on an even keel and we don't lose anything we've got, which is friendly relations! Generally sympathetic to the very earliest stages of the present fantastic Mauritian economic progress. It's sort of the junior Singapore now off the African coast. It was very tranquil, I had maybe four or five hours of work a day if I strung it out. The rest of the time I had a beach house, as well as a very handsome residence and garden.

Q: How did you happen to come back to be executive assistant in management which strikes me as being not a very tranquil position?

GAMMON: Ben Read, who was the Under Secretary of management, long time executive assistant, Bill Galloway had had a heart attack and was going to retire. He was at the point in terms of service that he was working for nothing, he had his 35 years in, that sort of thing. So it was a case of Ben wanted to find somebody suitable and I had known Ben

for a long time. He was deeply involved almost full-time in the new Foreign Service Act of '81, as it later became. This was in very early '80. So I was snatched back literally about ten or eleven months early from Mauritius. By then I had had my R and R and I wasn't that heart broken about coming back. So I came back to be executive assistant to Ben Read. Almost everything revolved around then the delicate negotiations of getting the new Foreign Service Act through the congress.

Q: This is to be done in 1989 and there are reverberations of this new act now that we're getting because it's causing a lot of a lot of trauma among officers who feel they're being forced out early. How did you feel about this act?

GAMMON: I thought it made sense. I recognized, which my distinguished senior officer colleagues did not—the field may be filled with trained political officers, but they slept peacefully through this major change in the Foreign Service structure. Which was, in essence, to recognize that a 3900 officer Foreign Service is no longer going to be able to provide that almost all senior officers will get an embassy or at least a very fine consulate general as the capstone of their career.

And then we had become like a very miniature military. That if you're in the career service and you're commissioned and you don't make a mess anywhere on the carpet, you can be pretty sure of making a four striper or chicken colonel. But the selection for flag or general officer rank is very narrow and there is no disgrace at retiring at the colonel level. Of those, I don't know what the percentages are now, it's probably maybe 25-30% of the colonels at most, have a look in at being brigadier or rear admiral. And of the rear admirals and brigadiers, maybe 20-25%, of them may get a second star. And of those maybe 10%, in other words the narrowing down is ferocious.

What the change in the Foreign Service Act as drafted under Ben Read's aegis by some fairly skilled types in personnel, was to say the old Foreign Service Act says that you have

to do something, the administration has to do something, to get rid of a senior officer. Select him out or that sort of thing takes action.

The new act says you have to do something if you want to keep him in. In other words, automaticity moved in the direction of elimination of senior people who were not urgently needed and it takes an action to keep them.

Q: In your dealing on this was the service, maybe the political officers who were supposed to be the people who keep the temperature of the political events in another country, didn't see what was happening on their front door step, but how about other groups?

GAMMON: The Foreign Service Association tends to reflect the desires and interests of the great mid-career and the most junior part of the Service. The upward thrusting people, were, I think, not heartbroken at the thought that a lot people were going to be knocked off the rungs over their head automatically.

Q: There's always the feeling that at the top is dead wood. So if you don't realize it eventually you'll become some of that lumber yourself.

GAMMON: I still tease my good friend Harrop, who in his forties, uttered the thought everybody ought to retire at age fifty. We've reminded him of that on every birthday since he passed fifty and I think he's going to be sixty in a couple of weeks!

Who was that type out in Berkeley who announced in the late '60s, early '70s, “never trust anybody over thirty?” There was a hilarious interview with him when he turned thirty, some four or five years later.

So certainly those representing the Service collectively were not opposed to the changes. Now that many of them are more senior and are being knocked off those rungs by the process and not getting the limited career extensions, which are the way you hang onto somebody because you really damn well need him and can't do without him as an

individual. And that's what's wreaking havoc in the senior ranks and the service, an eight year shakeout, we're still adjusting to it.

Q: Can you think of some specifics of things you were involved in in that?

GAMMON: One in particular, one member of congress who had a particular prot#g# or friend who was due to be, I think, selected out—No, he was a reserve on a reserve appointment, a patronage type thing and it was expiring and he was due to go out, and he would have gone out because he was shall we say of very mediocre quality. The Congressman's price tag for withdrawing his opposition in committee was that this particular prot#g# should be kept on, extended. Ben Read, who also a man of great integrity and sterling principles, gagged fearfully at that. As a hardened cynic I'm afraid I encouraged him to say well now let's look at the silver lining; yes this is too damn bad, keep this jerk on, but he won't do all that much damage and if we don't do it we don't get the act which is in the long term interest of the Service and the system. Things of that sort.

I was very helpful on a number of very sensitive security things involving the patronage channel. I had done one of these for Macomber when a very distinguished ambassador, political appointee, who had a terrible alcohol problem had to be squeezed out. Macomber flew up to see him in his New England summer place and persuaded him to resign on the grounds of healths, he had asthma problems as well as galloping alcoholism, he died literally in an alcohol accident, fell down the stairs and broke his neck a year or so later. I supplied Macomber with the punch line that persuaded him which was that his embassy had had a very fine inspection. The inspectors had said this is a tightly run, efficiently etc., etc. Macomber even called me up to say read me that line again and he used that to say “quit while you're ahead” to the fellow.

Several others in both career and non-career service. Very sensitive problems. What do you do with a wife who is a notorious termagant, married to a career officer who says that's my wife and you will not criticize. He was up for an another embassy and he simply

wouldn't have gotten it unless something could be done, it's an impossible situation. You can't expect a man to rat on your wife and say, “Yes, she's a headache,” so I puzzled that one through for Ben Read and said, “Ben call in so and so and say to him, 'Do you agree that morale at post is the responsibility of the ambassador?'”

Well, any Foreign Service Officer would say, “Yes, of course.” “All right, I'm going to put through your assignment to Embassy X and you know we've had these discussions in the past and that's a closed book. I don't care what the rights and wrongs are, but if morale at your new embassy collapses, then I'm going to snatch you out so fast your head will spin.”

Q: In other words, you were telling him he had to control his wife.

GAMMON: Yes, but he didn't have to admit that she needed control. You put it on a higher principle and that worked beautifully, he since had another splendid embassy. She may not have ceased to be a problem, but not quite what she had been in the past.

Q: So often, particularly at the embassy level management has to deal with the human equation which is putting somebody in who may himself or herself have a problem or the spouse may have a problem which as we know, living in the confines of an embassy this can have repercussions that go out everywhere.

GAMMON: Or the case in my earlier incarnation of a distinguished, well not so able, but very distinguished political appointee ambassador who had had another embassy before as I recall. And who was rendezvousing with this mistress at 2 a.m. in the morning in the office of his proctologist and this was in a high terrorist risk country. We heard about it through security, so the Under Secretary, Macomber, in this case, had to summon him in and say I don't give a damn what you're doing or what sort of equipment you use, but you will be accompanied when you leave the embassy by security guards.

Q: This is probably one of the side effects of terrorism is the fact that liaisons have to be cut down!

GAMMON: Then there was the other political appointee ambassador who tried to sneak out in a ski mask in order to go and call on one the FSNs from his consular section who was a rather toothsome little morsel. That too, we had to put a damper on.

Q: A ski mask being the badge of a terrorist.

GAMMON: We heard about that from the host country police. In that case this was not very long before the change of administration in the Reagan Administration, which by the way I was in M for the first three months of the Reagan Administration. I was present, this is too good an anecdote to miss, the afternoon that Reagan was shot. Richard Kennedy had taken Read's post as Under Secretary for Management. I had known Dick since he was one of Kissinger's people in the NSC in my S/S incarnation some years earlier. He got the phone call that the president had been shot. He very properly grabbed me and one other staffer, and we flew down the corridor to the operation center of the Department which has superior communications. We plugged in then, because Al Haig, as we all remember, went darting over to the White House very properly. Al's instincts were right in every respect except his PR instinct was abysmal.

Q: You might add for the record because people won't know what Haig did.

GAMMON: Haig went on television and said I'm in charge here and not to worry. But his sound instinct in this type of situation of passing the message to everybody that US government continues and there's no problem miscarried in his delivery—sounded like a putsch! Well, we did not know then and we didn't find out until many months later how serious the shooting was. At the time the early word was that the President was okay.

Q: I was in Naples as consul general and I remember I treated it rather casually because I thought that he had just been winged.

GAMMON: Yes. We were in the OP center from about 1:30 or 2 in the afternoon until 9:30 at night until he came out of surgery. The first thing we did was we sent for the

emergency manual. There is of course a manual in the Department for everything. The emergency book was still called the Carter-Mondale Book. The only thing it covered was the death of a president in an assassination; it was based on Kennedy, what you knew. It had the standard operating procedure, you do this and you do that, you get somebody from the historical office to make sure that there's a good historical record and reassuring messages to, the whole schmeer was all in there, except it did not cover what we then saw very clearly might be the real contingency until we were told, “Oh, poo poo, it was minor.”

Which was a lie. The Kennedy/Lincoln model is not the only one—there is also the Garfield and the McKinley. What do you do about the twenty-fifth amendment and the long lingering total incapacity and the Wilson precedent.

The first thing I did the next day was to ask the Op Center to redo the book, taking into account the twenty-fifth amendment, having some other contingency situation other than the fatal, an airplane crash or an assassination or a fatal abrupt cutting off of the presidency, to take account of the whole middle ground area that might develop—which I have reason to believe they did, I never saw the final product.

Q: To close off this particular period. You were there for the opening of the Reagan Administration. How much was this, as you saw it really what could be called a hostile takeover.

GAMMON: It was hostile on both sides.

Q: There couldn't have been two more diametrically opposed philosophies now than these two.

GAMMON: The career executive secretary of the State Department in the later Carter period, I will not mention by name, but who perennially gets mentioned as a future Secretary of State in the new Democratic administration, should there ever be one, was strikingly uncooperative during the transition, actively hostile during the transition, which I

thought was appalling and certainly Muskie would not have wanted. Working against the interest of the Service.

The one thing, I think it happens in all changes of party which are changes in the Administration, is the new crowd comes in suspicious of the Civil Service and the career Foreign Service, all career people because they've been working for the bad guys, they're tainted. And in fact what really happens is that all career people are dying to ingratiate themselves with the new bosses. So they'll go the second mile, they lean over backwards, they'll bust their guts to be as helpful as possible. But they're treated with great suspicion and it takes several months, many weeks to work through, until the new political master suddenly decides, “Well, hey, these guys kind of know what it's all about,” and they're very helpful and very supportive. It's one of the bad by-products of our system.

Q: Did you have any particular problems, you, yourself?

GAMMON: Not much. For patronage reasons, there were hoards of transition people appointed and we had a couple of dozen of them milling around the State Department, many of whom were of modest competency or less. Some of whom were quite good. And basically I was probably the senior person on the management side of the Department in the Career Service, as distinct from presidential appointees.

I passed the word saying, “Look, you guys don't need anybody to make policy or tell you how to make policy. You need somebody to tell you how to make things happen. How do you get put on the payroll? How do you get an office? How do you get a typewriter? How do you find a secretary? Come to me with this. When you run into problems let me know.” A little bit of that.

Then Haig was named very promptly and the first thing he did was to fire all the transitioners to the great applause of the Department.

Best anecdote on the whole tape. Ronald Reagan and the Reagan presidency is described as being lucky, and I can provide a bona fide account of that. During the transition period, I heard that a name was being considered for a high-level appointment by the new administration. This was somebody who had previously been a political appointee ambassador in an earlier Republican administration. I'm not telling you how much earlier, but there had been previous ones all the way back to Eisenhower. He had served maybe most of two years in his embassy, I don't think it was a change of administration but he had left. Our security people were tipped off through the local police that he was an active homosexual and that was there in the file. Well, the gentleman in question apparently had nostalgia for diplomacy and he took and passed the Foreign Service exams during the Carter Administration, fairly late, and he took and passed the orals.

Then, of course, the security investigation began to say “tilt!” Now I will not go into the rights and wrongs of policy, but policy then was and more for many, many years had been no way! Particularly and certainly justifiably in the case of closet homosexuals who would be extremely vulnerable to blackmail. So the chief of the security office told Ben Read and me, this was before the elections, he would take care of this they would pass the word.

A couple of weeks after the election, he came up to me and said—Read, of course, was a short-timer then, an outgoing political appointee. Carl came to me and said, “I'm very concerned. I sent our man in our security branch office, the nearest one geographically, to talk to this party and to tell him as part of a security interview, 'Look, no way. This is in the files and it's highly improbable you will be able to overcome this, because the evidence is very, very strong. So there's no way you're going to get a Foreign Service Officer appointment, former ambassador or not.'”

And the guy, when telephoned said, “Oh, no need to bother coming to see me and making the trip over here. I'm going to be in Washington with the President-elect, and I can look in on the State Department then.”

And Carl drew the correct inference. Look this guy's about to get an appointment. This was a very sensitive matter and I did not go to the transition man who was empowered on personnel matters. I thought this was too sensitive, its a security problem. But fortunately an old friend mine in an earlier incarnation in the State legal office in the Nixon Administration was a member of the transition team for some substantive area, so I talked to him.

I said, “Look I will give you the name and we've got a security record which is utterly damning as far as appointment is concerned and you should flag it for the transition office up on M street. Tell them for God's sake do not make any appointment without pre-checking the security, because it won't fly.”

He said he would take care of it. It may have been as early as the next day, I think it was probably two days later I heard on the car radio coming to work that this particular worthy was being rumored for a Cabinet appointment and the Cabinet Department was mentioned. I flew down to my lawyer colleague and said, “I thought you were going to tell him.”

He said, “I did, I told them.”

I said, “Well, did you hear the news this morning? This is what it is.”

At this point I said, “Look, it's a homosexual rap.”

Q: No matter how things go today it wouldn't work.

GAMMON: No matter how it goes. Particularly for the Reagan Administration, etc. So he went flying back up to “M” street. And it was scotched in the course of the day because a fellow with the press got to him as he left town that evening and said, “Hey, are you going to be appointed Secretary.”

He said, “No, I'm just coming in to give my advise to an old friend, the President-elect.”

That was luck, because if you think about the abortive Eagleton vice presidential candidacy, that would have been pretty nearly the dimensions of one like this and it could easily have happened.

What had happened was that of course with their usual incompetence in transitions office, they had flagged his dossier in the list of potential ambassadors, but not recognizing there was also a dossier as potential Cabinet member. That was practically my last newsworthy act.

Q: In these interviews, one question I like to ask is what did you feel, looking back on your career, was probably the thing you look back on with the greatest satisfaction?

GAMMON: Probably being foreign affairs aide to LBJ. Because he became President about a week after I had seen him for the last time. I was going to see him again shortly before leaving for Ethiopia.

Q: Is that file open?

GAMMON: Yes. I've vetted the archive on that. More because of the people and players involved and that sort of thing and the highlight. It certainly was not the most important foreign policy act, but it clearly was a high spot.

Q: How do you feel about the Foreign Service from what you know of it today? Would you recommend it to as a career?

GAMMON: I still do, though I warn people about the difficulty for the family and the two-career family. Yes, I'm very high on it. If you don't mind moving, it's the greatest life in the world.

End of interview